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REPRINTED, BY PERMISSION, FROM
"THE OUTLOOK" OF SEPTEMBER 23RD, 1905

JOSEPH PENNELL

ETCHER, ILLUSTRATOR, AUTHOR

BY

FREDERICK KEPPEL

FREDERICK KEPPEL & CO.
4 EAST 39TH STREET, NEW YORK
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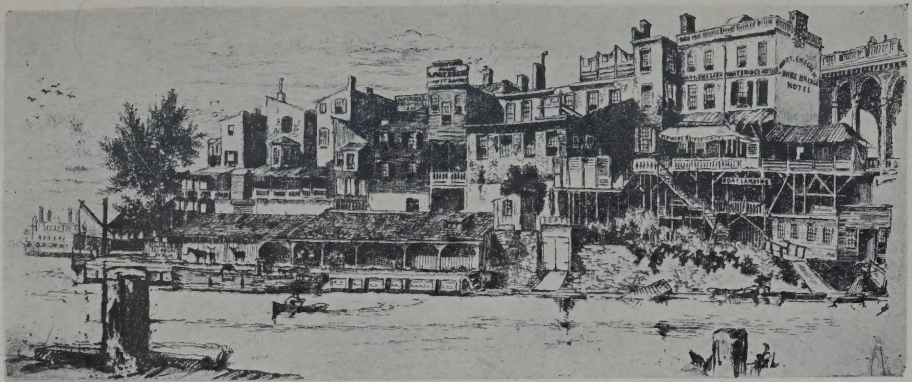
AMONG producers of fine pictures of various kinds it is the able and original illustrator who most quickly wins recognition and fame, and of all artists it is he who is the most necessary and most beneficial to civilization. Literature is certainly the most enormous power for good that we know, but many books and periodicals would be maimed and incomplete if unaided by an illustrator of the right sort. For example, what a loss it would have been if that familiar little masterpiece, Lewis Carroll's "Alice in Wonderland," had been originally printed and published without the admirable illustrations of Sir John Tenniel!

Unfortunately, this happy unity between author and artist is none too general, and many contemporary illustrations, although not necessarily bad as pictures, are nevertheless "*from* the purpose," as Hamlet says, and actually fight against and weaken the text which they attempt to elucidate and emphasize.

Next after the illustrator it is probably the

really able original etcher to whom fame comes quickly; and after him, in a descending scale, come the portrait painter, then the painter of other subjects, and, last of all in order of quick promotion, the sculptor. His statue or group cannot easily be multiplied, is difficult to move from place to place, and for these reasons must long remain comparatively unknown, while, on the contrary, the picture of the illustrator is examined by thousands of people in thousands of different places from the very day of its birth.

Of the many famous painters who thus won early recognition by means of etching or illustrating, or through both, I may mention Whistler, Sir John Everett Millais (late President of the Royal Academy, London), the Frenchmen Meissonier and Charles Jacque, and one of our famous Philadelphians, Edwin A. Abbey, R.A. In company with these eminent names we may place the name of Mr. Pennell. If, unlike the others, he is not yet famous as a painter, it is solely because the publishers and the public have not hitherto allowed him the time necessary for the making of oil paintings, water-colors, and pastels; but he has produced a few beautiful pictures in these mediums, although he has not yet exhibited them. Moreover, he is still a young man.



Callowhill Street Bridge, Philadelphia.
(Joseph Pennell's first etching, done in 1880.)

In the Twilight.

Joseph Pennell—like Whistler, Abbey, and other famous artists of American birth—has won name and fame in Europe before American recognition came to him. He comes of good old Quaker stock, and was born at Philadelphia on the fourth of July, 1860. He is the son of the late Larkin Pennell, who was an eminent member of the Society of Friends, and whose first American ancestor came to our shores in company with William Penn when the latter made his second voyage from England to the province of Pennsylvania.

I think that pictorial art—like music, rich dress, and certain other artistic but worldly vanities—was disallowed by the sternly conscientious first followers of George Fox; but, be that as it may, Joseph Pennell from his early boyhood was resolved to become an artist, and that indomitable "backbone" which distinguishes him as a man must have made difficult things easy to him as a boy.

His training began at the Philadelphia Industrial Art School, and was continued and completed at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. This was during the years when that admirable man, the late James L. Claghorn, was its President. Mr. Claghorn belonged to the very best type of American citizenship;

one of those essentially "big" and forceful men—president of this, chairman of that, trustee of the other public institution, but withal thoroughly democratic and quite devoid of all pretense or self-importance. This was the man who first made me acquainted with the work of Joseph Pennell, who was not then twenty years old, and I well remember the glow of pride on Mr. Claghorn's handsome face as he showed me certain etchings representing street scenes in Philadelphia, and his remark, "This is original work by one of our own boys; now what do you say to *that!*"

These first essays of the "'prentice hand" were little more than the prophecy of what the master hand was to do later, and yet they were full of good augury. Some of the essential qualities were already manifest—such as the unerring eye for the picturesque, and also that instinct for good drawing which we may compare to the delicate natural ear for music which renders it almost impossible for its happy possessor to sing a note out of tune. In both cases competent instructors can—and indeed must—develop and educate the gift which is inborn in a true artist; but if this gift is not there, the teachers can never create it.

In the vital quality of appropriateness as

At Lynchburg, Virginia.

contrasted with irrelevancy, Mr. Pennell's illustrations are certainly unsurpassed ; and it would be as difficult to find among them a picture which does not materially aid the text as it would be to find one which, in itself, is not a veritable work of art. But besides his acknowledged power as a draughtsman for illustration, his technical knowledge of reproductive processes gives him a distinct advantage over most of his confrères, so that his drawing is pretty sure to "print" well in the page of a magazine or a book, because he knows so well how to make his picture with that particular end in view.

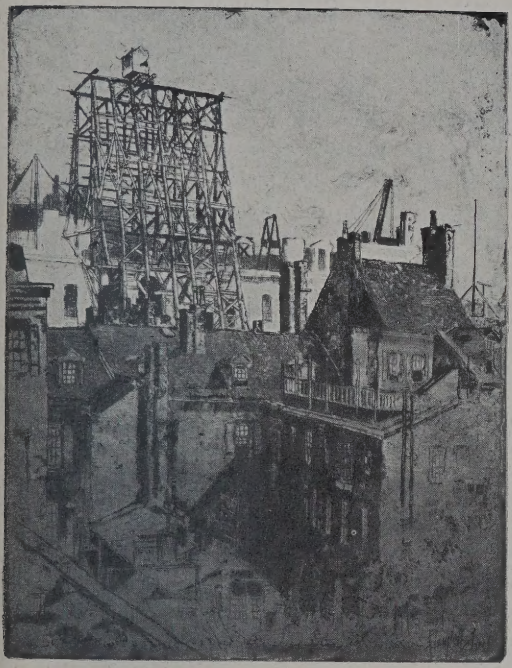
Another rare endowment is his peculiar faculty for giving to each one of his pictures its own true local aspect, so that there is no mistaking an American for an English scene or a Spanish for an Italian view. Very few artists possess this faculty of discarding their own particular national point of view and of absorbing the changed character of different foreign countries—no two of which are alike. The opposite condition is strongly felt in the case of the portraits of Americans whom we know, and which are painted here by visiting foreign artists of considerable reputation ; such pictures may display all the brilliant cleverness of the modern French

school, and may even be good as likenesses, yet we are sure to suffer from the "Frenchy" flavor which the foreign artist has unconsciously superadded.

But all this while we are leaving Joseph Pennell as a promising young art student in peaceful Philadelphia, whereas his fame was to be won a thousand leagues from his native city. We must follow him to Europe, whither he went in the year 1884; but, if we let him go there alone, this chronicle would be so incomplete as to be quite worthless. Another good Philadelphian must go with him, so inseparable for the last twenty years is the work of the two, although the one never does the particular work of the other.

I well remember hearing that man of genius, Henry Ward Beecher, say in a sermon, "When God gives a man a good wife, that man will thereafter have little need to pray to his Creator for other blessings." We all know of the beautiful union between Robert Browning and his wife Elizabeth; but this historic intellectual partnership was not more complete than that between Joseph and Elizabeth Robins Pennell.

The parallel is not without divergences. As poets the Brownings were (in a noble way) "two of a trade," while Mrs. Pennell never



Last of the Scaffolding. (Philadelphia Public Buildings.)

makes a picture—although she understands pictures so well; but, on the other hand, Mr. Pennell sometimes writes a book or a detached article, and this is the particular province of his wife. Another divergence from the parallel is that, while Mrs. Browning was strong in her intellect, her physical health was wretchedly feeble, whereas I verily believe that Mrs. Pennell hardly knows what it is to be tired either in mind or body, or, if she does, she never shows it.

The many Americans who have experienced her charming and simple hospitality in London would, I am sure, like to have me go on and on with this part of my subject, and it is with an effort that I "keep my mouth as with a bit and bridle," and shorten all that I would like to say in my enthusiasm for Mrs. Pennell. We all know her books and magazine articles, but it is not so generally known that she is the writer of the widely read London letters of art criticism, signed "N. N.," which for years have regularly appeared in the New York "Evening Post" and in the "Nation." To me these articles are the best of their kind; at least, I have learned more from them than from the writings of any other of the excellent writers of contemporary art criticism, for not only is their

author endowed with "the pen of the ready writer," and thoroughly equipped with knowledge and understanding of her subject, but she also takes the pains to gather and then distribute definite, timely, and accurate information concerning art and artists. Her latest book, recently published, is the biography of her own uncle, Charles Godfrey Leland, whose "Hans Breitmann Ballads" made him famous a generation ago, and whose books on the Gypsies are so well known. A much thinner disguise than Mrs. Pennell's "N. N."—which is simply two letters taken from the middle of her surname—is in the case of the ubiquitous "J——," a gentleman who figures so interestingly in her books of travel; but intelligent readers will have small difficulty in guessing the identity of this mysterious "J——"!

Thus it was that this bright and enthusiastic young couple left Philadelphia and settled in London; and thus began their notable artistic and literary work of the last twenty years. To illustrate their position, let us consider the familiar case of new and intelligent tenants taking possession of an old house. The former tenants may have been intelligent also, but they had grown so used to their surroundings that they never once thought of the many improve-

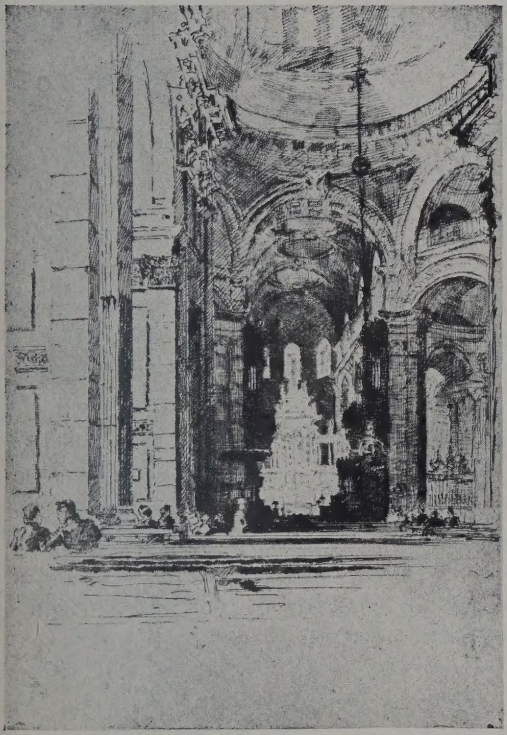
Towers of San Ghimignano.

ments which were obvious enough to the newcomers. It was with the spirit of these new tenants, then, that Mr. and Mrs. Pennell came to "discover" Europe in the year 1884. Things and scenes which were ordinary matters of course to the native Londoners, or the natives of other parts of Europe, were to the young American couple intensely interesting novelties; and it was thus that they saw and felt them, and thus that they described them in picture and book. Some of the earlier books or single articles which Mr. Pennell illustrated in Europe were written by his wife. The first of these books was "Our Canterbury Pilgrimage," published in 1885. Then followed "Two Pilgrims' Progress" (1886), and "Our Sentimental Journey" (1887). Later came Mrs. Pennell's charming book "In Gypsy-land," which leads the reader through untrodden ways in southeastern Europe. In 1889 appeared "Our Journey to the Hebrides," and in 1890 "The Stream of Pleasure," which was jointly written by Mr. and Mrs. Pennell, as was also that important book "Lithography and Lithographers" (1898).

Of books written entirely by Joseph Pennell we have "Pen Drawing and Pen Draughtsmen" (to which I shall devote a separate para-

graph later on); "Modern Illustration" (1895); "The Illustration of Books" (1896), being the course of lectures delivered by him at the Slade Art School; and "The Work of Charles Keene" (1897). He has also edited "Pablo de Ségovie"—the edition containing the beautiful illustrations by Daniel Vierge—and "Some Poems by Tennyson," which was done for the sake of the Pre-Raphaelite illustrations which appeared in Moxon's edition about forty years ago.

Next comes the list of Mr. Pennell's illustrations to the writings of various other eminent authors. In 1884 was published "Tuscan Cities," by W. D. Howells; the notable series of illustrations to the "English Cathedrals" of Mrs. Schuyler van Rensselaer appeared from 1887 to 1890; "The Saône," by P. G. Hamerton (1888); the reprint of Washington Irving's "Alhambra," with an introduction by Mrs. Pennell (1897); "A Little Tour in France," by Henry James, (1899); "Italian Journeys," by W. D. Howells (1901); "East London," by Sir Walter Besant (1901); "Castilian Days" (1903), by John Hay; Andrew Lang's "Edinburgh"; S. R. Crockett's book on his own Scottish country; several books of the "Highways and



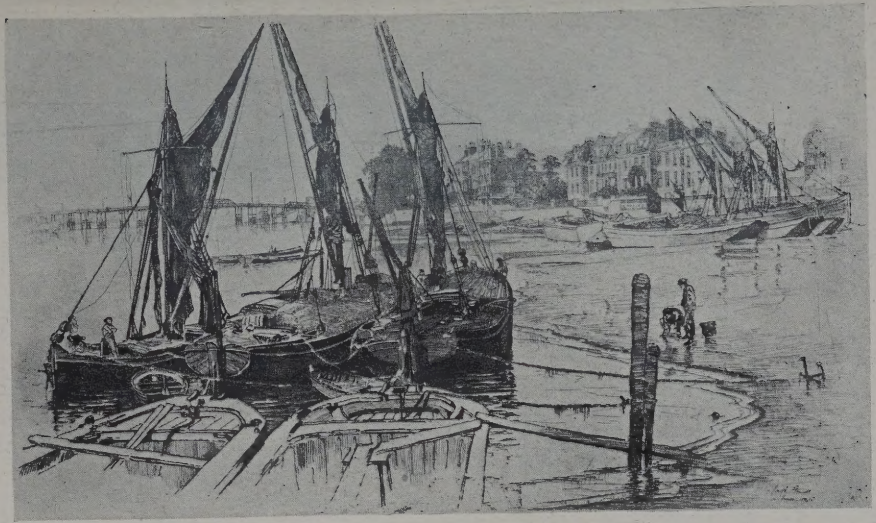
The Choir, St. Paul's.

Byways" series; Maurice Hewlett's "Road in Tuscany" (1904); and "English Hours," by Henry James (1905). Mr. Pennell also directed the illustrating of John Morley's "Life of Cromwell," besides contributing to it many illustrations of his own; and he has also finished the drawings for two books of special importance—one of these is on the inexhaustible subject of London, and the other is Marion Crawford's book on Venice. Most of us have learned that when Mr. Crawford writes on an Italian subject he is at his very best.

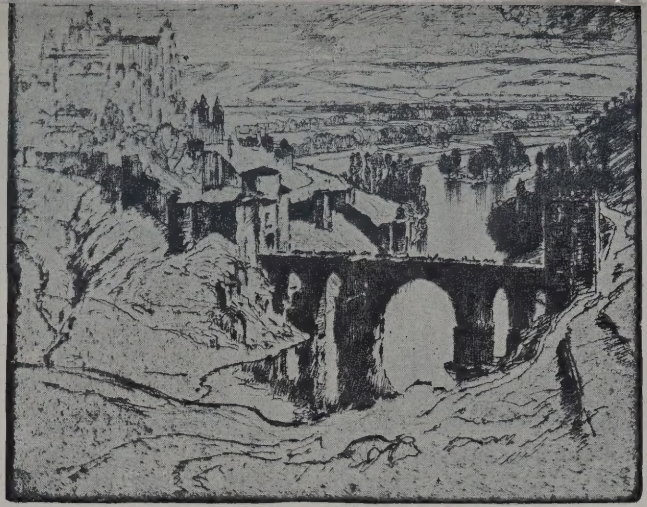
Truly this is an honorable record. But in addition to Mr. Pennell's illustrations for books by these distinguished authors he has found time to write at least one book of prime importance—seeing that it was the first book on a new and significant subject, "Pen Drawings and Pen Draughtsmen" (1889), a large and costly work which has already gone through three editions. Thirty years ago there would have been no need of such a book, for before that period the illustrator drew his design upon a piece of boxwood and handed it over to the tender mercies of the wood-engraver; often the engraver spoiled the beauty of the artist's design, but whether he spoiled it or not he always, in engraving it, had to annihilate the actual picture

which the artist had drawn. But with the invention of what is vaguely called "process" reproduction of a drawing all this is changed, and to-day the first-class illustrator is in a position to belie the old adage that "you can't eat your cake and have it too"; these artists can eat their cake but still have it. What they do is to sell to the publisher, not their drawing, but only the right to reproduce it. When this is done, by means of photography and "process" work, the original drawing is handed back, intact, to the artist, and he has then the right to dispose of it as he pleases.

This revolution in reproductive methods for the illustrating of books and periodicals has caused (as all revolutions are sure to cause) widespread suffering to innocent persons. The wood-engraver for about four centuries had been indispensable because his was the only kind of picture which could be rapidly printed on a machine press along with the type which printed the pages of the book; and it may here be added that the American school of engravers on wood had become the most artistic and expert in the world. Then it was that the new "process" method was perfected, and thereafter wood-engraving was killed. The new method was found to yield an unerring reproduction of the



Chelsea. (The Larger Plate.)



Saint Martin's Bridge, Spain.

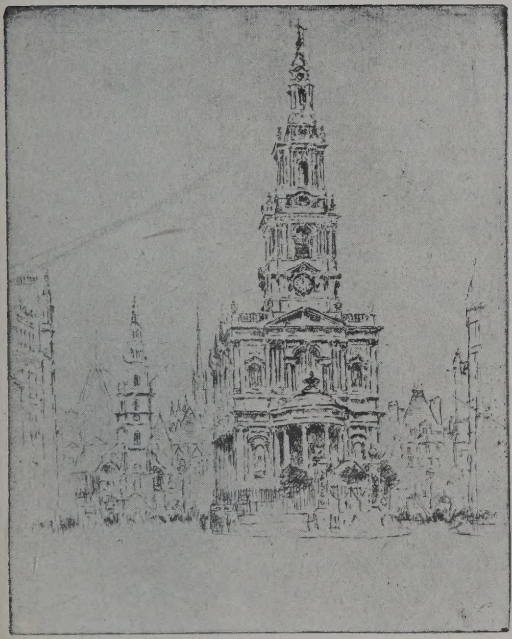
artist's picture just as he had drawn it, and so it came to pass that what John Ruskin calls "the noble human labor of the engraver" got its death-blow, and the world got one more demonstration of "the survival of the fittest."

Mr. Pennell's forthcoming book, "American Illustration and Engraving," is awaited with special interest. The efficient manner in which he discharged his duties as chairman of the International Jury of Awards for Illustration, Etching, and Engraving at the St. Louis Exposition warrants us in expecting an important book, the more so as his early work, "Modern Illustration," shows what he can do when writing on this subject.

Besides these writings on art subjects, there are others which record the prowess of Mr. and Mrs. Pennell as bicyclists throughout the Continent of Europe and even over the Alps. Mrs. Pennell's book, "Bicycling," appeared in 1885, and quite recently Mr. Pennell revisited the Alps on a motor cycle and made the record of being the first man thus to traverse eleven of the difficult passes in a single week. Still another of his activities is represented by the public lectures which he has delivered before certain art societies in England.

Let us now consider Mr. Pennell as an ori-

ginal painter-etcher; for it is in etching that he is, perhaps at his best. A French writer has wisely said that while artists work daily at painting, it is only on their *good* days that they etch. Another French authority tells us that no one can do a thing thoroughly well unless he can do it with ease. Both of these conditions apply to Mr. Pennell as an etcher. The quality and volume of his work as an illustrator we know; but yet, throughout these busy twenty years and more, it is evident that when an extra "good" day came to him he was pretty sure to make an etching, and that etching was pretty sure to be full of the painter-etcher's prime quality, namely, spontaneity and freshness. Speaking on this subject, the great landscape etcher Sir Seymour Haden has said to me: "An etching which occupies the artist for, say, three days, is in fact the work of three different men; the artist's mood is one thing on Monday, another on Tuesday, and still another on Wednesday; but the freshness and unity of an etching cannot be maintained unless the artist knows exactly what he intends to do and then does it at once." And in Sir Seymour's pamphlet, "About Etching," he writes: "The painter, by overlaying his work, may modify and correct it as he goes on. Not so



St. Mary le Strand.

the etcher. Every stroke he makes must tell strongly against him if it be bad, or prove him a master if it be good. In no branch of art does a touch go for so much. The necessity for a rigid selection is therefore constantly present in his mind. If one stroke in the right place tells more for him than ten in the wrong, it would seem to follow that that single stroke is a more learned stroke than the ten by which he would have arrived at his end." "The faculty of doing such work supposes a concentration and a reticence requisite in no other art."

Whistler was of the same opinion, and although it was not his habit to praise the work of his brother artists, yet in London, when Mr. Pennell made an exhibition of his own lithographs, Whistler contributed to the catalogue the following characteristic little note of introduction: "There is a crispness in their execution, and a lightness and gayety in their arrangement as pictures, that belong to the artist alone." I may add that Mr. Pennell's work in lithography well deserves to be treated in a separate article.

This impromptu spontaneity of his method involves one little drawback — if it be a drawback at all: it is that in his architectural etchings

what the French call the *orientation* is reversed ; west takes the place of east, and south of north. But in this he follows the precedent of Rembrandt, Whistler, and Seymour Haden. The sole preoccupation of these masters was to make an artistic picture, and they cared nothing at all for observing the points of the compass. The printing of course reverses the design as seen on the etched copper plate.

To have seen Mr. Pennell at work etching a plate is a thing to remember. He loves to depict the towering buildings of crowded city streets. Most etchers of such subjects would make a preliminary sketch on the spot and afterward toil laboriously over the copper plate in the retirement of their studios ; but Mr. Pennell takes a far more direct course, and one which would disconcert almost any other artist. He chooses his place in the crowded street, and stands there quite undisturbed by the rush of passers-by or by the idlers who stand and stare at him or at his work. Taking quick glances at the scene he is depicting, he rapidly draws his lines with the etching-needle upon the copper plate which he holds in his other hand, and, what to me seems an astonishing *tour de force*, he never hesitates one instant in selecting the exact spot on his plate where he is about to

Classic London, St. Martin's in the Fields.

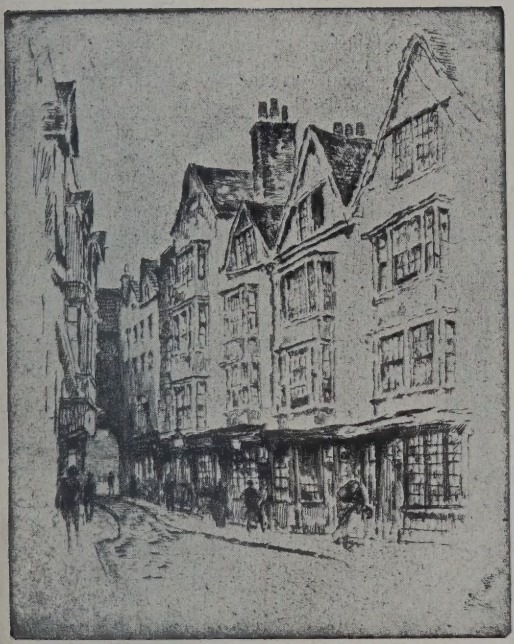
draw some vital line of the picture, each line of it being a "learned stroke" such as Seymour Haden insists upon.

Of late he has become the printer of his own plates. The fastidious Whistler was forced to do the same. It is a troublesome operation, but when an etcher prints his own proofs (provided that he knows how to do it), we have the satisfaction of knowing that each proof is exactly what the artist intended it to be. With regard to Mr. Pennell's etched copper plates, it is not generally known that he has already destroyed most of them, including all the earlier ones. This is a wise thing for an etcher to do just as soon as his plate shows the first signs of deterioration from the wear and tear of the printing-press.

As a controversialist in matters concerning art and artists Mr. Pennell's earlier years in London were stormy ones, and he certainly succeeded in making several more or less sleepy critical dignitaries "sit up" in amazement and indignation at his audacity. One of them, a really eminent critic, said to me on this subject: "How dare this rash young American upset our accepted theories, and attack men of established reputation!" But, little by little, a change came about, and these solemn conser-

vative folk awoke to the discovery that when Joseph Pennell published some revolutionary opinion, he was very apt to be in the right! The truth is that to his stern Quaker conscience there is only one law—Right is right, and must be upheld; wrong is wrong, and must be denounced, no matter who may be hurt or who may be offended. Moreover, his criticisms can be constructive as well as destructive. It was he who discovered and first proclaimed the extraordinary talent of Aubrey Beardsley, and it was he who recalled from partial neglect the merit of the illustrations of such great artists as Charles Keene and Daniel Vierge.

Mr. Pennell's attitude in his controversies gave him a great advantage as compared with the attitude of his own divinity and intimate friend, the great Whistler. In Whistler's controversies the unpardonable sin of his opponent was always committed against the personality of the great man himself, whereas Mr. Pennell, though hating the sin, continued to love the sinner. I remember a quaint demonstration of this, at a time when controversies were being waged rather furiously. Being at his house, I quoted to him the remark of Lady Teazle to her husband, Sir Peter, in Sheridan's "School for Scandal," "I vow I bear no malice against

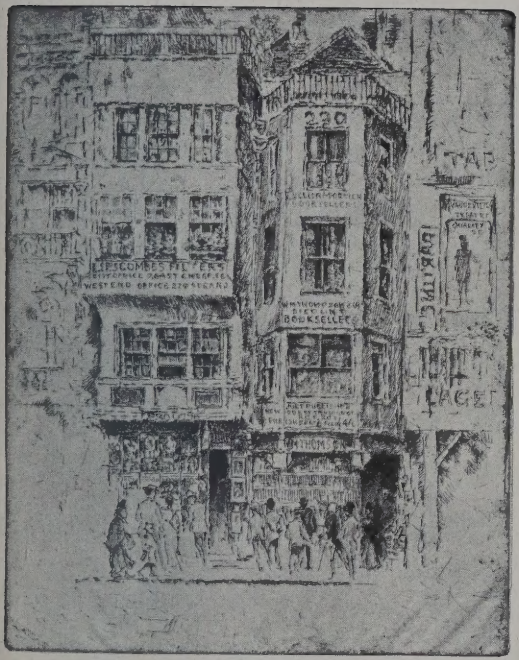


The Last of Old London.

the people I abuse!" "No more do I," was Mr. Pennell's rejoinder; "personally they are very decent fellows."

Apart from the steady improvement in the quality of his pictures (and that he is twenty-five years older than when I knew him first), I can perceive no change in Joseph Pennell. A positive personality, he was *himself* from the beginning, and he will remain so to the end. His intercourse of twenty years with many distinguished people in London has not imparted to his speech even a trace of the London accent, nor have the more ornate and ceremonious manners of his British and Continental friends changed him in the least from the simple and kindly young Philadelphian whom I first knew. As I write I can almost see him in his London home, taking his ease in his library and comfortably "dumped" down in his low-seated wicker armchair. It was in this unceremonious, but characteristic pose, that Whistler made his portrait—knees and elbows being well in evidence. An outsider seeing him thus would think (begging his pardon) that he was a very lazy man. Joseph Pennell a *lazy* man! Any one who thinks so still has evidently not read the preceding pages.

ETCHINGS BY
JOSEPH PENNELL



Number 230, Strand.

ETCHINGS

BY

JOSEPH PENNELL

The following etchings by Mr. Pennell can be supplied, at present, by Messrs. Frederick Keppel & Co., No. 4 East 39th Street, New York. The plates are destroyed.

The Philadelphia Series

Callowhill Street Bridge
Chestnut Street Bridge
Last of the Scaffolding
Under the Bridges on the Schuylkill
Public Buildings, Philadelphia
Water Street Stairs
Street Sweepers
Sauerkraut Row
The Alleyway
Coal Wharves on the Schuylkill
Plow Inn Yard
Brass Foundry
Below Atlantic City
Chancery Lane

THE NEW ORLEANS SERIES

Inner Court
In the Twilight
'Sieur Georges
Pilot Town, Louisiana
At Lynchburg, Virginia
An American Venice

THE ITALIAN SERIES

Towers of San Ghimignano
Street in Fiesole
A Narrow Way, Florence
The Swing of the Arno, Pisa
A Covered Street, Florence
In the Piazza, Pistoia
Porto Romano, Florence

THE LONDON SERIES, (No. 1)

Chelsea
Chelsea (the smaller plate)
Statue of Charles I
Choir of St. Paul's
Palace Theatre
Victoria Station
Copying Turner's Paintings
Millbank
Black Friars' Bridge
Start of the Coaches

Saint Paul's.

Park Row
The "L" and the Trinity Building
Four Story House
Golden Cornice (100 Broadway)
Union Square and the Bank of the Metropolis
Times Building and 42nd Street
Forty-Second Street
Lower Broadway
Trinity Church
Canyon No. 1
Canyon No. 2
Canyon No. 3
Tribune and the Sun
White Tower
The Shrine
Statue of Liberty
St. Paul Building
The Thousand Windows
The Hole in the Ground
Union Square, Rainy Day
"The Flat Iron"
Old and New New York
The Cliffs
Wall Street
Times Building
St. Thomas and St. Regis
Fifth Avenue

St. Martin's Bridge
Bridge of Alcantara
Toledo
Castle of Cervantes
The Alcazar, Toledo

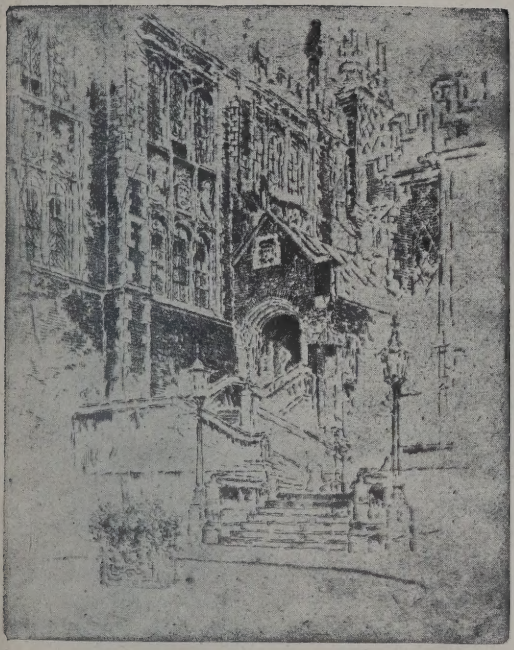
The London Series (No. 2)

Albert Hall
Admiralty
Bedford Place
Big Tree, Cheyne Walk
Bridge Street, Westminster
British Museum
Barber Shop
Bushey Park
Butchers' Row, Whitechapel
Crystal Palace
Cheyne Walk, Chelsea
Classic London, St. Martin's in the Fields
Coliseum, Trafalgar Square
Cumberland Gate
Cumberland Terrace, Regents Park
Clock Tower from the Surrey Side
Cannon Street Station from the River
Cowley Street, Westminster
Church of St. Mary le Strand
Dock Head

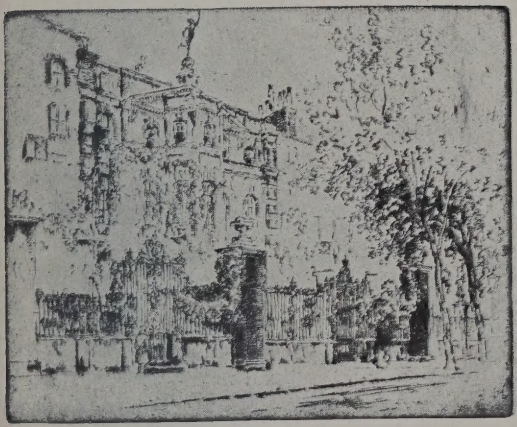
The Entrance to Henry VII Chapel—Westminster Abbey.

Duke of York's Column
Entrance to Henry VII Chapel, Westminster Abbey
Exeter Hall
Empire Theatre
Foreign Office
From Tower Bridge
Greenwich Park, Number One
Greenwich Park, Number Two
Great College Street
Great Gate, Lincoln's Inn
Great Cranes, South Kensington
Gothic Cross, Charing Cross
Goldsmith's Grave, The Temple
Guild Hall
Greenwich from the River
Gate of the Temple
Gate of Burlington House
Gaiety Theatre from Drury Lane
Grosvenor Road
Garrick Theatre
House Where Whistler Died
Hall, Lincoln's Inn
Hall Door, Lincoln's Inn
Haymarket Theatre
Hampton Court Palace
Hotel Victoria
Hyde Park Mansion

Hippodrome
Hempstead Ponds
Hyde Park Corner
Institute, Piccadilly
King's College, The Embankment Gate
Knightsbridge
Law Courts
Lindsay Row
Lincoln's Inn Fields
Limehouse
Ludgate Hill, showing the Holborn Viaduct
London Bridge Stairs
Leadenhall Market
Last of Old London
Lambeth
Loundes Square
Lion Brewery
Magnificent Kensington
Marble Arch
Montague Street
Northumberland Avenue
Number 230, Strand
Narrow Street
On Clapham Common
Old Court, Lincoln's Inn
Old London Churchyard
Pond, Clapham Common
Park Lane



The Hall Door, Lincoln's Inn.



Rossetti's House.

Piccadilly from Park Lane
Park Gate
Queen Anne's Mansion from the Lake
Rossetti's House
Royal Entrance, Victoria Tower
Rainy Night, Charing Cross Shops
Royal Windsor
St. Augustin's and St. Faith's
St. Bartholomew's Gate
St. Bartholomew's, The Founder's Tomb
St. Clement Dane's
St. Dunstan's, Fleet Street
St. James Park
St. James Palace
St. John's Gate, Clerkenwell
St. John's, Westminster
St. Paul's
St. Paul's, The West Door
St. Paul's, South Porch
Swan at Leadenhall
"Sunlight Soap," A London Shop
Shot Tower
Spitalfield Church
Steps of British Museum
Thames at Richmond
Thames from Richmond Hill
Thames Wharf
Tower Bridge

Trafalgar Square
Tyburn, The Motor Car
Top of Regent Street
Temple of Pomona
Up to St. Paul's
Villiers Street
Vale of Health, Hampstead
Victoria
Whitehall Court
Waterloo Bridge and Somerset House
Westminster Abbey, West Front
Waterloo Towers
White House, Tite Street